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THE UTOPIAN POLITICS OF FEMINIST ALTERGLOBALISATION GROUPS

**The importance of everyday life-politics and personal change
for utopian practices**

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ABSTRACT:

In this article I show that social movements tend to use one of the three possible strategies and that the contemporary alterglobalisation movement, divided into three streams, use these three strategies at the same time. I elaborate on one of these strategies, the utopian ‘Do-it-Yourself’ (DiY)-strategy, in which the activists try to change themselves and their immediate environment by circumventing and bypassing the existing power structures. Usually this personal change has to do with a re-organization of one’s everyday life and one’s day-to-day relationships with others. Yet, although the DiY-activists within this movement use slogans like ‘the personal is political’, they often they neglect gender. As a result, feminist groups organize themselves separately within this movement, aimed at developing alternative practices and lifestyles, by using the politics of alliances to avoid isolated struggles. In my conclusions I analyse what is old and what is new in the DiY politics of the alterglobalisation movement, criticizing the idea of the contemporary DiY-activists that they have invented a totally new strategy. I also criticize the idea that the DiY-strategy is enough to change society. From my perspective, more institutionalized mediators are needed to advance or negotiate alternatives to the embedded political practices: the three streams of the movement need each other. My final concluding question focuses on the reasons why feminist ideas and practices continue to be important in the alterglobalisation movement. Feminist groups emphasize that ‘the personal is political’ must include ‘the quotidian is political.’ They start from their own experiences, emphasizing non-hierarchical ways of forming democratic organizations through an attempt to incorporate customarily excluded people and valuing differences while at the same time negotiating and accommodating the power of different groups. Feminist groups in particular make clear that changing daily power-positions is an important part of politics.

1. INTRODUCTION

For years my research topic is social movements, especially the utopian and feminist aspects of it. However, as I already stated at the Utopian Studies Conference in Madrid in 2003 (see Poldervaart 2006), in utopian studies very little attention is given to, what can be called ‘utopian movements’. Most publications describe or analyse utopian designs or are case studies of intentional communities. As a result, in the eyes of most people utopianism remains restricted to written designs about possible futures. And the focus on particular case studies of communities has many times caused researchers to ignore the context of the movements behind these communities and their differences and similarities with other movements. In this article I focus on utopian movements. The aim is to show the connection between one stream of the alterglobalisation movement and the utopian movements before, and how important feminist ideas about daily life and personal politics are for utopian practices.

Accordingly, I start this article with showing how social movements use three different strategies and that the utopian strategy is one of these; I will mention their most important characteristics based on my long inquiry into these movements. Secondly, I will describe the contemporary alterglobalisation movement (or better: a movement of movements). I shall identify the different streams of this movement and how these strands are connected with different strategies. Thirdly, I intend to analyse the characteristics of the utopian stream of this movement, based on their own publications. This stream uses a Do-it-Yourself (DiY) strategy, claiming this strategy is totally new. By examining some shortcomings of the ideas of these activists (claiming the personal is political but neglecting gender) in the fourth section, I will analyse in the next one some feminist groups who are active in this movement and who use a comparable DiY strategy. In conclusion, I try to answer three questions: What’s new, what old in de DiY strategy of the alterglobalisation movement?; Is this strategy enough to change society?; Why are feminist ideas so important for this strategy?.

2. UTOPIAN MOVEMENTS AS ONE OF THE THREE STRATEGIES OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS.

In the history of social movements there are different ideas about their strategies, although social scientists have not theorised this question very much. Most of the time

they accept that social movements are directed to influence or to overthrow the government. So two strategies are mentioned. The existence of a third one, movements in which the activists were (and are, see below) directed to practising their ideals in daily life is not known very widely and only considered to have happened in the movements of the 'sixties' (the 'New Social Movements'). In my publications I call these movements 'utopian movements': movements in which the members try to change society by living and exemplifying their ideals about a better society in the here and now by setting up communities and hoping to convince contemporaries to do the same (Poldervaart 1985, 1993, 1995, 2001a,b, 2002, 2003, 2005 a,b). I have shown that this strategy, directed to influence people by their alternative practices, from the bottom-up, is used already in the first Christian communities, in the heretical groups of the 12/13 and 16/17 centuries, in the first socialist movements (1825-1850), again in the non-Marxist but yet socialist (and feminist inspired) movements of the period around 1900 and in the sixties (1965-1975).

The political scientist Adam Lent (1999) recognises also three strategies/approaches of social movements. He calls these: personal-local, temperate and transformatory. The personal-local approach is formed upon the notion that individuals who are dissatisfied with the existing conditions must change themselves and their immediate environment, thus bypassing the main concern of the other strategies/tendencies, i.e. how to relate to existing power structures. Usually the change involves enhancement of self-confidence, self-reliance and self-respect, improved understanding of one's own motivations, goals and place in the world; creation of a stronger ethical sense; a re-organisation of one's everyday life; radical changes in one's day-to-day relationships with others in one's family and local community (ibid: 176). This politics was, according to him, always an important aspect of utopian socialism, anarchism and the cooperative movement and was especially important in the sixties by the civil rights and feminist movement.

On theoretical level this emphasises on the personal-local of the movements of the sixties has led to the *New Social Movements-approach*. Characteristics of these new social movements are (Van der Heijden, 2000: 19-20): emphasise on post-materialistic values (self-employment, direct participation, a less impersonal society); the members are from a big part from middle class; they reject hierarchy and form decentral organised networks of groups with direct participation of all involved; they suspect the institutional politics and the state and wanted to change society directly

and not to conquer political power; they used new, unconventional forms of action; besides societal aims they are especially directed to develop an own, new, identity, both on individual and collective level.

Yet it is the question how far these characteristics are 'new'. Besides Lent's personal-local politics of social movements, Pichardo (1997) shows that these so-called unique characteristics not refer to all the movements of the sixties and that not is recognised that there is no difference between the former utopian movements (ibid 418) and the new social movements. However, he did not elaborate on this statement.

According to me (and Lent) three different strategies can be distinguished in the history of social movements:

1) trying to change society by living and exemplifying a particular set of ideals in the here and now by setting up communities and hoping to convince contemporaries to live in the same way (utopian movements);

2) trying to overthrow the state. In these revolutionary movements (of Marxists, many anarchists) first an enemy has to be defeated before one can think of ideals about a better society. Living your ideals in the here and now was considered to undermine the revolution.¹

3) trying to influence the government directly. This moderate or temperate pragmatic strategy only could arise when the concept of 'citizen' got meaning and this didn't happen before the second half of the eighteenth century. In this strategy, movements engage in negotiations with governments. This process of negotiating had been labelled *political participation*: being active in a political party or in a social movement with the aim to influence the policy of the rulers. It is this strategy that has received the lion's share of social scientists' attention, especially since the end of the 1980's when the theory of 'New Social Movements' lost ground to the more pragmatic Political Opportunity Structure-theory of social movements (Hooghe, 2004).

Although my description of utopian movements has much to do with Lent's personal-local approach and with the New Social Movements-theory, I want to summarise the most important characteristics of utopian movements (included those of the sixties), based on my own historical research:

* forming communities or groups in the here and now with people who have the same ideals; looking for alternatives for family life, against family-egoism.

- * searching for what people have in common in stead of forging solidarity by identifying a common enemy (their difference with revolutionary movements)
- * the idea that people have to organise themselves, from below. This broadens the idea of politics.²
- * looking for a new moral, a new ethic, in which people care for each other, take responsibility for others
- * against dualistic thinking: private-public, women-men; workers-masters, etc.³

Hereafter I want to show that much of these characteristics you can recognise in the DiY stream of the contemporary alterglobalisation movement.

3. THE ALTERGLOBALISATION MOVEMENT AND ITS THREE STREAMS: THE DO-IT-YOURSELF ACTIVISTS, THE NGO'S AND THE REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALISTS

In November 1999 in Seattle (United States) a social movement came into the limelight that the media quickly labelled the anti-globalisation movement and was described as something totally new. But it is a myth to think this movement suddenly descended from the sky in Seattle, just as it is a myth that the activists had suddenly discovered a new theme, that the movement only consisted of people from the rich Western countries and that the activists were only against globalisation (Stokrom 2002: 37-81). Before Seattle all kinds of action groups in the North and the South were fighting against the global powers of the World Bank (Berlin 1988, Madrid 1994), the IMF, the European Union (1989-1992; Amsterdam 1997) etc. Older activists, connected with all kinds of NGO's, can trace their first activities to the 1980s, when they mobilised actions around the writing-off of the Third World debt, like the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (Smith, 2001: 4). Protests against the commercialisation of practically every aspect of life started for example in 1984, when, in Canada and the United States, adbusters (culture jamming) protested against the billboards in public spaces and in 1995, when in Britain the 'Reclaim the Street'-activists were demanding the streets back as public places. The rise of the Zapatistas has been an inspiration for the movement as well. This Mexican group published its manifesto against the NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) on the internet on 1 January 1994. In the summer of 1996 they invited "leftist activists, youngsters, women, gays and lesbians, people of colour, immigrants,

workers, farmers around the world” to discuss new ways of thinking about power, resistance and globalisation (Klein 2002: 177-188). This meeting resulted in the foundation of the *People Global Action* (PGA) and many visitors played a key role in Seattle in 1999.

The contemporary alterglobalisation movement can roughly be subdivided into three different streams, each with its own strategies and therefore its own ideas on politics. First, connected with the utopian strategy, the Do-it-Yourself activists who try to practise their ideals in the here and now and who emphasise the importance of ‘free places’, sometimes called ‘commons’ (public places, not belonging to commercial trade or industry). Secondly, the many NGO’s (Non-Governmental Organisations), using the moderate strategy: their members try to become influential through negotiating with political parties, global powers (such as the World Economic Forum) and multinationals. Thirdly, the revolutionary socialist groups, connected with the revolutionary strategy, which try to acquire state power (the Socialist Workers Party in Great Britain, the International Socialists in Holland, Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire in France, the Italian PRC and many Marxists groups in Asia). The latter two strands strive for one coordinating organisation that is united behind one programme all groups have to agree with, which could be an alternative to contemporary economic globalisation. With that aim, the French NGO ATTAC (Association for the Taxation of financial Transaction for the Aid of Citizens) organised the first World Social Forum in Porto Alegre (Brazil) in 2001. But during that Forum the DiY activists, circumventing the traditional political routes, asked: “Must we, as a reaction to the worldwide crisis in representative democracies, come up with one specific alternative to globalisation? Is not the most important thing to have one world with the possibility of many worlds in it like the Zapatistas plea for?”(Klein 2002: 171). Against the idea of one united organisation, they proposed a universal right for self-determination and diversity. In this way a movement arose that rejected one global government, and at the same time emphasised a new vision of an international network, consisting of more and more local initiatives, each based on direct democracy (ibid: 173).

Although the three streams work together on a reasonable basis (in this way respecting diversity, which is a new phenomenon in the history of social movements), I will concentrate on the DiY activists in the rest of my article, because in my opinion, they are connected with all previous utopian movements in the past. But utopianism

always reflects its historical context⁴ and therefore I want to analyse the characteristics of the DiY activists, based on their own publications⁵, in a search for similarities and differences with former expressions of utopianism.

4. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF DIY ACTIVISM IN THE ALTERGLOBALISATION MOVEMENT.

The ‘Do it Yourself’ concept arose during the culture critique formulated in the sixties (McKay 1996: 103,183), but that does not mean that such ideas aimed at changing society had not been expressed before. Not until 1980 did the punks use the concept explicitly and from that time on the concept got a more established meaning (ibid:38,73-101).

DiY refers to a specific ideological attitude and utopian practice (Schafraad 2001: 127). The ‘do’ of DiY refers to activities to accomplish specific goals; so it is not only about ideas or critiques. The ‘it’ refers to many different activities, but not to every activity: it always is about designing one’s own (alternative) life. The ‘yourself’ is where most emphasis lies and refers to the idea that everybody can take the initiative, not only social or political institutions. Some DiY activists prefer the ‘We-do-it-Ourselves’ concept, because it is always about doing something together (McKay 1998: 27).

One important aspect of DiY activism is that it diminishes the distinction between action and way of life, between public and private, between the political, the social and the cultural. The DiY concept can be regarded as putting into practice the notion that politics starts in daily life (Kallenberg 2002: 91-99) and therefore has many connections with the feminist slogan ‘the personal is political’ (see below). DiY activism is about creating your own alternatives, about independence from government institutions, about changes from below, about demanding public spaces for collective use without advertisements. These public spaces are often called ‘free places’ or ‘commons’ (Klein 2000: 316; Marcellus 2003) and you can recognise them in the many food co-operatives, squatted buildings, free music festivals and spontaneous street parties.

Most DiY activists think this DiY strategy is totally new. This is illustrated clearly by a Zapatista-activist who argues:

‘People have been disillusioned with the ballot box for a long time, here and

all around the world. And yet they are disillusioned too with rebels who come with guns and say: “give us the state, we will do it better”. So what are we seeing in Chiapas? It is an alternative to both –a new notion of doing politics. You could call it radical democracy. People take their own destinies into their own hand.’ (Zapatista Gustavo Esteva, in: Kingsnorth 2003: 42-43).

However, I argue instead that all utopian movements have used the DiY strategy. The aim of all utopian movements was to show that alternative ways of living were possible. Although DiY activism is not a new strategy, there are differences between the utopian movements before and during the sixties (1965-1975) and nowadays. To show this, I will explore the characteristics of contemporary DiY activism, based on their own publications:

a) the rejection of ‘collective identities’. This concept was considered in the New Social Movement theory as typical for these ‘new’ movements, and although this theoretical approach had much to do with utopian movements, the DiY activists of ‘the’ movement criticise this concept. They consider identity as the process of creating and maintaining borders (between women and men, black and white people, gays and heterosexuals, etc). Recognising that identity movements as emancipation movements have been important in struggles against all kinds of hierarchies, today the negative sides come into view: the emphasis on one identity separates people from each other, not only women from men etc., but also activists from non-activists, and could encourage group conformity (Heckert, 2002: 26-28). We need not strive for one identity but for many identities. Accordingly, the concept of identity is changed into *affinity* (McDonald 2002: 109-128). To be involved with each other is no longer stimulated by having one collective identity, but by a ‘sharing of skills’, in which every person makes a contribution. Neither the history of a group nor ‘the power of unity’ is of crucial importance. Today the key thought is rather that every person is different and responsible for him/herself and others. The most important thing is not to *be* something together, but to *do* something together, not where you come from or to which group you belong, but what your aim is (Holloway 2002).

b) the rejection of representation politics. Representation implies that one person can act for the group, but in affinity groups this idea is rejected. Commitment to a group is now based on commitment to projects pursued by the group (which may be temporary in nature), rather than on membership of an organisation. This way of looking for radical democratisation had always been a part of social movements (Tilly

2004), but utopian movements in particular have contributed to the development of the concept of democracy (Neville and Sington 1993: 252).

c) DiY activism relies on *networking* and, because of that, on *fluidity*. John Jordan describes the emergence in the mid 90's of a decentralised movement of movements held together by poetic stories and relationships, rather than programmes and ideology, a complex web of inspiration rather than coordination. In the movements of the sixties, the members dissociated themselves from the dominant ideology and opposed it. By doing this, the identity of the movement was not formed by them but was forged by the 'enemy'. In this way the identity of these movements remains within the rational framework of the established order and would never be a danger this order had not foreseen. In the alterglobalisation movement the DiY activists want self-organisation and self-determination, both as means and ends. The ideal is to be ungovernable, symbolised by Jordan as the logic of the swarm in which no one is in charge. Such a fluid and unpredictable group can *not* be governed (Jordan 2002).⁶

d) The movement is global and local. Never has a movement been so international while at the same time local initiatives are emphasised (Klein 2002). 'Nowadays the local appears to be the most essential to understand the "swarm logic"(...) This means also that you have to give attention to your neighbours rather than waiting for commands from an absent authority.(...) By working locally and by globally sharing our local stories, by connecting everything and providing many forms of reactions, there is no need to "organise" the global movement, only to connect the different parts' (Jordan 2002: 9).

e) DiY activists reject the idea of one program as an alternative to neo-liberalism (McDonald 2002). They do not construct social models for a future society, because they are interested in the here and now. They consider the pluralistic character of the movement as very important, because what connects all different DiY groups is the fear that the freedom of local communities is threatened (Sas 2001).⁷

f) the aim of the DiY activists is to deepen the quality of relationships between people by creating diversity.⁸ The means to reach this are their network culture and their rejection of leaders or hierarchy (Jordan 2002). 'The aim is to illegitimate the institutions of capitalism, not by confronting them head on but from below, to undermine them from everywhere and yet nowhere, by creating something so utterly different (..)The starting point is not how to oppose capital, but how to build

a better life beyond it' (ibid). Or, as Aubenas and Benasayag (2003: 129) state: 'Not one new model, but a swarming of a multitude of projects, connected with reality, which stay besides capitalist centrality, being in conflict with it or supplementing it'.

g) Because power in its traditional meaning is rejected, the concept of *revolution* has got a different meaning. 'Revolution is not a moment in the future in which the power is taken from the ruling class, but is a social process that is lived daily in the here and now' (Longo Mai 2002). Or, as the Dutch-Belgian journal Mba-Kajera used as their slogan: 'Revolution is not to overthrow the existing system, but the creation of something new'.

h) One of the characteristics of DiY activism is the *narrative, story-telling* structure of their actions. The meaning of this is that activists seize the possibility to tell their personal stories (which feminism emphasised since the late 1960s). This means a change from representation to narration (McDonald 2002). Via the internet, a network arose that finds its coherence in telling many stories, not in embracing one rhetoric. The movement has learned that a web of testimonies and experiences is more important to stimulate the imagination of people than to command them (Jordan 2002).

i) the importance the movement gives to *language* is shown in their story telling culture and in their rejection of the conquest of power. The Zapatistas have proven that it is possible to develop a new language of resistance that is different from the tired language of revolution. One of the differences is that the new language is full of imagination and story-telling (Holloway 2002). 'Not the Internet is the best weapon of the Zapatistas, as often has been said, but their real secret weapon is their language' (Klein 2002:180). In this language of resistance, fun is very important (Holloway 2002), as is speaking in riddles and paradoxes and not in securities (Klein 2002: 177-188). Higgins (2005), who explored the poetry of Sub-commandant Marcos of the Zapatistas, states that Marcos has developed an alternative imaginary and language representing a 'cultural humanism' which may provide a fruitful starting point for conceptualising alternative forms of politics and ethics.

j) DiY activists continually emphasise that people often show altruistic behaviour, that people will do things for each other from which they themselves do not benefit (Marcellus 2003). In this, these activists show a different attitude to people from what many social theories based on the 'Rational Choice Theory' tell us, namely that people only become active after they have weighed the costs and benefits and

have concluded the benefits are bigger. Therefore DiY activists try to theorise the ‘gift-economy’ (Marcellus 2003; Vaughan 2004) and practise this in give-away shops, in their ‘food-not-bombs’ demonstrations in which they distribute free food on the streets etc.

5. FEMINISM AND THE ALTERGLOBALISATION MOVEMENT.

Like all social movements, feminism also uses different strategies. There are many different distinctions of feminism possible (for example: radical, socialist and bourgeois), but such distinctions are not focussed on the central conceptual question: what meaning is given to gender.⁹ The division most often applied today is equality versus difference-feminism. My problem with this is that it has no place for the utopian strategy of feminism. Olive Banks (1981) was the first who distinguished analytically between three different feminist traditions. Besides equality and difference-feminism, she identified utopian socialist feminism, rooted in utopian socialism, linking criticism of the private family to advocating certain forms of communal life. This kind of feminism emphasises daily life and tries to overcome dualities and therefore also the duality between equality and difference. ‘We do not know what “real” men and “real” women are’, the Saint-Simonians already stated around 1830 (Poldervaart 1993). Today, influenced by post-modern notions, feminists from this stream argue that femaleness and maleness are constructed. It is this third strategy that has to do the most with utopianism.

These different feminist strategies do not fit into the different strategies of social movements in general I have mentioned before, because the revolutionary strategy is missing. Feminists have never striven to conquer the state.

The third feminist strategy uses a broader conception of feminism than the other two feminist strategies. Feminism in this broader, non-institutionalised form, encompassing men as well, is a struggle against all forms of hierarchy. This broader conception is mostly recognised as the special legacy of second wave feminism, ‘a legacy that strive to keep relating the personal and cultural to the economic and political’ (Segal 1999: 232), although the utopian socialists already related the personal to the political and economic realms (see for an elaboration on this: Poldervaart 1993). Especially third world feminists of the second wave have showed that ideologies of womanhood have as much to do with class and race as they have to

do with gender (Mohanty 2003: 237). However, within left movements, gender and race questions are quickly pushed from the agenda or treated as an add-on, not reflecting the interrelation between economic and gender hierarchies. The contemporary DiY activists *try* to recognise that anti-racist and anti-sexist struggles are at the heart of the question of what is desirable in our ‘alternative’ societies and communities, but often they forget these struggles. Although slogans like ‘personal politics’ and ‘politics starts in daily life’ are mentioned many times in their publications, it seems these concepts were used without recognising their feminist origin. Only some male alterglobalists recognise feminism as their forerunner, like De Marcellus (2003:6) who observes: ‘The feminist movement tried to show us new insights and practices but we have generally managed to ignore them’. Mostly, ‘personal politics’ is considered to be the ‘new politics’ of the movement (Kingsnorth 2003: 327). Burbach (2001: 98) considers ‘the personal as the post-modern political’ and mentions that the slogan ‘the personal is political’ comes from the counterculture movements of the sixties. Both authors who analyse the DiY part of the movement never mention feminism or gender-issues. The important insight feminists had already acquired in their consciousness-raising groups, is nowadays also recognised by DiY authors (without references to feminism): the dominant system is also in yourself and therefore you have to change yourself.¹⁰ Like Subbuswamy & Patel (2001: 543) who state: ‘Self-criticism and personal change are not apolitical –refusing to be what the system requires you to be is a profound and powerful form of direct action’. At the same time it is recognised how difficult this is, especially for male activists: ‘Dealing with our own alienation and conditioning is a very hard and unromantic task, which has no room for heroes and martyrs (...) Chucking a brick through a pane of glass or building an incendiary device is piss easy in comparison’ (Abramsky 2001: 563).

The result of omitting references to feminism when they use the slogan ‘the personal is political’ is that gender has disappeared from this slogan. I think feminists of (the beginning of) the second wave never could have fathomed this would occur. One consequence is that the alterglobalisation movement devotes no attention to gender issues like violence against women worldwide or to the feminisation of poverty and migration (FAM 2003: 188-191). So the question should be whether it is too early and/or too easy to consistently reject collective identities or not. The danger is that it seems identities are not important any longer. Most contemporary young feminist activists agree that identities are constructed, temporary and changeable. But

this does not mean that it is unimportant whether you are female or coloured, or what your economical background, sexual orientation or education is (Saharso 2000). Therefore sometimes women and other minority-groups need to organise themselves separately every now and then. And that is exactly what women's groups do in the alterglobalisation movement. I will analyse some of these feminists DiY groups in my next section.

6. FEMINIST DIY GROUPS WITHIN THE ALTERGLOBALISATION MOVEMENT.¹¹

Trying to get a map of feminist groups connected with the alterglobalisation movement is a rather complicated undertaking. Browsing the internet, one can find uncountable women's organisations, but most of them belong to the moderate strategy, directed to state policies or to international legal frameworks, not to societal change as a whole. When you are looking for groups that are working from a feminist perspective with a conception of politics directed to develop alternative practices and lifestyles, they are more difficult to find. There are many very small groups around the world (of the DiY part of the movement) that are working very locally and do not have proper websites. However, as for analysing their texts, the internet is the best resource. This section focuses on the websites of five European groups who direct their discourses and practices to a global reality; two of them are even global networks.

1) Eskalera Karakola. Karakola is a self-managed feminist centre in Madrid, Spain, which, for the last seven years, has housed a diversity of projects fostering the critical and participative citizenship of women on local and global levels. Their projects are occupied with such diverse topics as queer theory, precarious labour and living conditions, and running a free library. Being explicitly a space for self-organisation of women, Karakola is open for men as well. On the European Social Forums (Paris, London) Karakola was cooperating with NextGENDERation .

2) NextGENDERation network (NG). This is a European trans-national network of about 150 students, researchers and activists with an interest in feminist theory and politics and their intersections with anti-racist, migrant, lesbian, queer en anti-capitalist perspectives. They are concerned with the production of critical knowledge that enables the transformation of the world they live in. NG was founded in 1998

because of the wish to have a platform for younger feminists. NG participated on the World and European Social Forums, making critical interventions.

3) FeministAttac (FemAttac): a group constituted within the German network of Attac, one of the most visible networks of the alterglobalisation movement, pressing for reforms of the international financial market. FemAttac aims to analyse global economics from a feminist perspective and to highlight the widely invisible role of 'female work' in the global capitalist market. FemAttac offers conferences that mainly deal with the consequences of the GATS (General Agreement on Trade in Services).

4) The World March of Women (WMW): a feminist action network of grassroots women's organisations. In 2000 they organised a world-wide demonstration of over 5000 women's organisations coming from 161 countries. Their main aims are to end poverty and violence against women. Nowadays WMW is one of the five members of the 'International Council', the coordinative body of the World Social Forum. To build another world, WMW suggests alliance building, globalising solidarity, women's leadership, making feminist alternatives to neo-liberalism and patriarchy and an autonomous, transparent, democratic and creative global women's movement.

5) People's Global Action (PGA). This is the only analysed feminist group in which men are over-represented (Scholl 2004: 87). PGA is a loose global action network for grassroots movements, growing out of the international Zapatista gatherings in 1996. Its first conference took place in 1998, when movements from all over the world met in Geneva and stated: 'PGA is a tool for coordination, not an organisation. No organisation or person represents the PGA. PGA will limit itself to facilitating coordination and exchange of information between grassroots movements, through conferences and means of communication'. When people or organisations want to take part in PGA actions, they have to agree upon five key aspects: a) rejection of capitalism, imperialism, feudalism and destructive globalisation; b) rejection of all forms and systems of dominations and discrimination (patriarchy, racism, religious fundamentalism etc.)¹²; c) a confrontational attitude; d) a call do direct action and civil disobedience: resistance aims to maximise respect for life and oppressed peoples' rights and to construct alternatives to global capitalism; e) an organisational philosophy that is based on decentralisation and autonomy. PGA can be considered as being explicitly feminist, as the Gender Declaration of the PGA conference in Cochabamba vividly illustrates: 'PGA is a movement which is crosscut by the gender

perspective, therefore we take action against discrimination along the lines of gender, class and ethnicity'. PGA mainly manifests itself by conferences worldwide (in Asia, Latin-America, Europe) and, in recent years, on regional levels.

I will concentrate this analysis of the website documents of these feminist groups on their *social practices*, connected with the *radical democratic process*. All the groups emphasise the importance of personal change. The ways they try to practise this is by emphasising experiences and by locating these experiences, by awareness and critical self-reflection, by experimenting in everyday lives ('the personal is political' must include 'the quotidian is political' states Karakola) and by a subversion of the normalised order (Scholl 2004, 72-84). A PGA male activist states: "A struggle aimed at deconstructing masculinity should spend time building a new subversive culture which would give us pictures and feelings of a de-gendered society. (...) We have to create new words and invent new feelings" (ibid, 80).

For answering the question of what the alternative social practices of these feminist networks looks like, Scholl uses the term 'tactics', referring to Michel de Certeau (1984, xix) who considers tactics as social practices to subvert the hegemonic practices produced by unequal power relations. De Certeau introduced this term because many everyday practices are tactical in character, since everyday life is full of practices dictated by the dominant powers.

Scholl (2004, 86-109) identifies six different tactics from the internet documents of the feminist groups: Tactics of inclusion, of negotiating power, of opening spaces, of autonomy, of connection: alliances/affinity/networks, and of direct democracy. Summarising his findings shows that *inclusion of excluded people and groups marked by constructed differences* seems to be an important tactic. This does not mean that differences are abolished to unify people under a shared and collective identity. Rather, it is about valuing differences, while at the same time this valuing may not result in neglecting the *power structures* that are established in society by these very differences. Thus the tactic of inclusion always has to be accompanied by a tactic of negotiating power. Central to this is the reflection on the power structures of their own resistance-group. It places a special responsibility on men to recognise their often privileged positions, but also for example on Europeans, to be aware of Eurocentric behaviour. Forced consensus should be avoided and people should be encouraged to speak, or to speak less.

Another important tactic is the politics of alliances to *avoid isolated struggles*. This tactic is a rather inherent characteristic of the alterglobalisation movement. Like the rest of this movement the feminist groups tend to use the politics of networking to locate themselves in a broad context of feminist and alterglobalisation struggles. Contrary to most social movements before, connections are here *not based on identity but on affinity*, which implies fluent solidarities and constantly changing constellations of cooperation.

The tactic of connection can be seen best in the context of the tactic of autonomy, sided by tactics of opening spaces. While the tactics of connection foster alliances to embed groups and movements in broad networks, the tactic of opening spaces and of autonomy urge us to look for self-determined spaces within and beyond such networks. Opening spaces can be a very important means of the excluded to create their own physical and mental spaces for developing alternative social practices and ways of life. Autonomy is the tactic for established 'open spaces' to develop more profound forms of self-organisation (and therefore also of self-empowerment). The groups at stake stress that every form of autonomy is necessarily a collective process whereby diversity has to be fostered not to reproduce the exclusive patterns of monolithic and hegemonic spaces in society.

Finally the tactics of *direct democracy* have to be seen as a search for alternatives for representative democracy. This tactic also belongs to the alterglobalisation movement in general, but the feminist groups have elaborated this point very thoroughly. What are the alternative practices for representation they have developed? There are three interrelated dimensions of representation to be addressed: first, how the political subject itself can be conceptualised outside the party-like type of representation; secondly, group-internal modes of representation and, finally, the way whole movements should be dealing with the problem of representation.

NG organised (at the ESF in Paris (2003)) a seminar about 'Politics of Representation in Social Movements' and made it clear that representation has not so much to be understood or be related with delegates or elections, but rather with the embodiment of differences. Representation means making a group or category homogeneous and can never work. They make a plea for the politics of becoming, and for a process of creating political subjects again and again by fostering self-determination and self-organisation: the very act of self-organisation is already a political action (Scholl 2004, 105-106).

For alternatives to organising representation within resistance groups, different suggestions are made and brought into practices about how direct democracy can work. Most important is not to make decisions on behalf of others like in parliamentary forms of democracy. Direct democracy is not, in the first place, a mode for reaching decisions, but rather for engaging in a fair and equal discussion in which all points of view are included. For big forums, spokes-councils are used in which the different affinity groups have to deliberate without all participants, but with their direct feedback.

Direct democracy on the scale of whole movements remains difficult and a problem is also that the DIY groups are not so visible in the whole movement because the NGOs and revolutionary socialists have an effective representational structure. But of course the WSFs and ESFs are not established institutions, they are in a process that can be evaluated and re-directed: the DIY activists can do their own thing at these Forums, organising workshops the way they want it.

The relationship between these feminist DIY groups and the *radical democratic process* has already been substantially discussed: these groups practise democracy as a daily process, which means including and negotiating power. These activities will never end and should not be considered as a political goal to be reached. When daily life is politicised and politics is a daily process, new public, autonomous, spheres are needed that widen the discursive space, to convince people that normalised power relations can be changed. But for extending democracy to daily life, feminist groups are also continually working on cross border co-operation (Scholl 2004, 118-120). All these ideas and practices are centred around the idea of self-organisation, remaining a crucial tool for excluded people to set up their own structures and establish less exclusive spaces. These ideas have much to do with Foucault's concept of *gouvernementalité* (ten Kate and Manschot, 1995, 28) with which he means self-government, a technique to resist the narrow definition of governing as task of the state. Feminist alterglobalisation groups bring into practice Foucault's advice that power relationships should be as open and unpredictable as possible to avoid social hierarchies and domination. They show that self-determination and autonomous self-organisation have to be part of political systems (and hence of democracy) to make constant contestation of social hierarchies possible. Besides their self-organisation, their cross-border cooperation results in networks. These networks produce a decline of forms of organisation where individuals fulfil

defined roles (Scholl 2004, 120; see also McDonald 2002, 116; Bleiker 2005, 201,205). Networks avoid social fixations and the rise of hierarchies; their social practice stands also for the refusal to be represented by a group. The network of affinity groups that can be found in the whole alterglobalisation movement is the non-hierarchical alternative for the social practice of delegation. By their emphasis on daily life and personal change and their expanding this to cross-border networking, it seems as if the feminist alterglobalisation groups are more conscious of the importance of extending democracy to daily life than the other DIY groups in this movement.

7. CONCLUSIONS

In this article I have elaborated on the characteristics of the utopian movements included those of the sixties, based on a lot of theories and descriptions of academic authors (see Poldervaart 1993) and of those of the DiY stream of the contemporary alterglobalisation movement, for the most part based on how these activists describe these characteristics themselves. Although DiY activists consider their politics as a totally new strategy, the aim of this article is to show that this politics has many similarities with the politics of all utopian movements before. At the same time I have stated that you have to contextualise utopianism (Poldervaart 1993, 1995). The contemporary, globalised world is not the same as the world of the sixties. Therefore the first question I want to answer is:

What is old and what is new in the DiY politics of the alterglobalisation movement?

Looking at my analyse of the characteristics of the utopian movements up to and including the sixties (section 2) and at the descriptions of the characteristics DiY theoretical activists themselves give of their movement (section 4), you can see many similarities. From the utopian socialists on in all utopian movements representation politics is distrusted, is tried to network between different communities, is recognised that the future is open, that you have to practice your ideals in the here and now, that the most important aim is to deepen the quality of relations between people; all utopians have rejected the idea of (violent) revolution and emphasised the importance of imagination and the idea that people will do things for each other. Therefore my conclusion is that the so-called ‘new politics’ of the alterglobalisation movement has links with all historical utopian movements. Small differences are that the contemporary DiY activists reject identity politics (see section 5) and have more

success in establishing networks between a multitude of projects in the North and the South. However, what is emphatically *new* is their conscious use of language, their international networking (of course made possible by the internet), their rejection of all kinds of hierarchy and their post-modern notions¹³, such as working in affinity groups in which complete agreement isn't a necessity, unity not prescribed while autonomy, diversity and a plurality of alternatives (like in the utopian fiction of the 1970's) are emphasised and respected.

Another question I want to try to answer, although till now I have not ask it, is: *Is the DiY strategy enough to change society?*

Although many DiY activists suggest their strategy is the best and the only one that is possible, I am hesitating about this. I think Naomi Klein is too optimistic when she states (2002: 185): 'In the end the autonomous spaces in which democracy, freedom and justice could flower, will create counter powers against the state, only because they exist as alternatives'. I think there have to be some, more institutionalised groups or persons who defend or negotiate these 'free spaces' to the rulers. So I agree with some DiY activists who emphasise that the three parts of the movement need each other: 'Without the "radicals" this whole movement wouldn't have existed and would now be quickly recuperated, co-opted. Without the "reformists", we would be isolated and wiped out. We are at once opposed and allied. (..) No one part or tendency of the movement can seriously expect to convince the others in the short term (...) The movement must be like the society it is building: a place of autonomy, diversity and respect' (Viejo 2003: 372-373). And I want to add: the 'radicals' are not only the DiY activists, but also the revolutionary socialists who are an important ally in the protests against the top-meetings of the world leaders. In spite of the critics the DiY activists and revolutionary socialists have on each other (see for example Kingsnorth 2002: 231; Callinicos 2004: 102-105), also the revolutionary socialist Callinicos (2004: 115) emphasis that 'the remarkable degree of unity that has been forged is a precious achievement that needs to be preserved'.

So according to me the DiY politics needs mediators. Who could these be? Castells (1997: 61) and Van der Heijden (2000: 235-239) emphasise that innovations in politics must come from social movements and cannot dictated in a top-down manner by political parties; according to them these parties could be possible mediators for the innovations social movements bring forward. However, I think political parties are too much involved in the established system. At this moment I

consider the moderate NGO's as the best mediators for DiY politics: they are the allies to the world of power.¹⁴

The latest question I will try to answer in this conclusion is:

Why are feminist ideas and practices so important for the contemporary alterglobalisation movement?

In my theses (Poldervaart 1993) I have worked out the feminist aspects of the utopian movements. However, as I have shown in section 5, the activists in the alterglobalisation movement tend to ignore feminism (like in all social movements: mostly changing the relations between people are considered to be subordinated to the 'political aims' of a movement). Based on the research of Scholl (section 6) I have tried to show the important ideas and practices the feminist DiY groups have brought into the contemporary movement: they thoroughly work with personal change, conscious that society is also in yourself and re-conceptualised 'the political' and transformed reflection into an act of democratic, everyday politics. Starting from their own experiences, they continually emphasise inclusion and negotiating about power-positions. Rejecting essential identity politics does not mean that it is unimportant whether you are female or coloured, what your economical background, sexual orientation or education level is. Inclusion only works when the different power-positions are not ignored. Feminist groups within the movement made clear that changing daily power-positions is an important part of politics. At the same time these groups emphasise that the movement have to give room for different groups to organise themselves and that every group have to cross-border their identity in networking. The feminist groups try to work together with the different groups of the whole movement, emphasising non-hierarchical ways of organising and demanding time for discussions. Perhaps it is possible to state that the feminist DiY groups within this movement are the most consequent utopians today.

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Most important websites of the researched feminist groups (see for an overview Scholl 2004, p. 134-136):

- Eskalera Karakola: <http://www.sindominio.net/karakola/>
- NextGENDERation: <http://www.nextgeneration.net>
- FeministAttac: <http://www.attac.de/feministattac/>
- World March of Women: <http://marchemondiale.org/>
- People's Global Action (PGA): www.pga.org
www.pgaconference.org/postconference/an_gendertransversel.htm

¹ For examples of this (Marx struggling against the first -called 'utopian' by himsocialists, the Dutch anarchistic leader Domela Nieuwenhuis against the 'colonies'), see Poldervaart 1993. This struggle happened again in the Dutch squatter movement (Poldervaart 2003).

² Although the feminist movement from the sixties claim they have broadened politics with their slogan 'the personal is political', this other conception of politics is already used in the Saint-Simonian movement of 1825-1850, and again outspoken by Frederic van Eeden around 1900 (see Poldervaart 1993: 100-105; Becker and Frieswijk 1976: 43). You can recognize the same idea of politics in Foucault's plea for 'The ethic of care for the self as a practice of freedom' (Foucault 1984).

³ Criticizing dualistic thinking did not happen before the first (utopian) socialist movements. With this critique the utopian socialists herald an important renewal in Western philosophical and political thought, according to Diana Coole (1988: 5). Especially in the (DiY-stream of) the alterglobalisation movement dualistic thinking is continually criticized.

⁴ Utopianism has changed in the historical process and undergone two important shifts (see Poldervaart 1993). In the first shift (with utopian socialism) it was acknowledged for the first time that utopias are historically defined, but indirectly the utopians saw their ideals as appropriate and applicable to all their contemporaries. In the second shift (around 1970) this universal validity is criticised. In these new utopian fictions the authors played with diverse future possibilities, with antagonism and contradiction and argue for continuous changes (and one can consider these ideas as a kind of signs of post-modern notions).

⁵ In their article 'Movement-relevant Theory', Bevington and Dixon (2005) plea for a dynamic engagement with the research and theorizing already being done by movement participants. They show that there is sometimes a big gap between academic schools of social movements and the theoretical analysis of the participants of these movements themselves.

⁶ However, Jordan point out that this 'swarm logic' does not mean that actions are the result only of pure spontaneity. The most successful movements are those which succeed in adjusting quickly to changing situations and that demands big preparations and extending already existing contacts and methods to acquire information. He warns against the tendency to go back to old ways of struggle: big demonstrations in stead of decentralised actions, long speeches in stead of gatherings and rounds of introductions.

⁷ Sas mentions that the media complain that the movement hasn't a clear positive message, gives no alternative for the New World Order of neo liberalism. According to him the media don't understand the strivings of the activists and he defends the plural character of the movement. However, for some participants of the WSF not formulating one program was so frustrating, that they make such a program themselves. See Barrez 2001: 254-262.

⁸ According to me you can state that the French utopian socialists strive for the same aim, especially Fourier.

⁹ I consider sex as a part of gender, like Nicholson (1995) and Butler (1993), but I don't want to explore the sex-gender issue here.

¹⁰ With this they go beyond the opposition structure-agency (Melucci 1996) or system-subject (Borren 2003), an opposition that is characteristic for many social movements.

¹¹ The information of this section is based on the research of one of my students Christian Scholl (2004). I have supervised his thesis and at this moment we work together in a 4 year research project about the democratic alternatives and affinity politics of the alterglobalisation movement, subsidized by NOW.

¹² Scholl (p. 19, note 5) correctly mentions how ironically it is to mention the first two key aspects separated: it mirrors exactly the problem of radical movements: it makes visible how gender exclusion are separated from economic exclusions and treated as an additional topic that has to be addressed 'as well'.

¹³ I will not explore postmodernism here; therefore I will refer to Poldervaart 2001 a + b, 2002, 2005b and in particular to Roseneil (1999) who asks herself what theoretically post-modernity means in political terms. She states that the politics of post-modernity shows something significant new: 'a radical, pluralistic, democratic, contingent, participatory politics of human life choices and differences' (p. 165). She mentions five characteristics of this politics (p. 165-166), characteristics which have many similarities with the characteristics I found in the texts of the DiY-part of the alterglobalisation movement. See also Eschle (2005: 26) who highlighted in her article 'one particular strand of the "anti-globalisation movement"', one which resonates with anarchist, "post-modern" and feminist organizing and which seeks to construct movements activism on a radically democratic basis'. (But she does not give a special name to this strand).

¹⁴ An example of this just happened at the Incommunicado-conference in Amsterdam (June 2005), visited by development-NGO's and DiY computer activists. While the NGOs emphasized the importance of good organizations, the DiYs argued that they didn't want to become the next bureaucracy. When the NGOs complained about the non-structured organization of the computer-activists, these DiYs answered: 'But you as NGOs can try to put your governments under pressure [defending our ideas], can't you?' (Bossema 2005).